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NSC BRIEFING

3 January 1955

THE DJILAS-BEDIJER AFFAIR

- I. Almost one year after he was center of major Yugoslav internal policy dispute, Milovan Djilas--ex-Vice President of Yugoslavia and formerly one of "Big Four"--stands accused of criminally making propaganda against state. Accused with him, and responsible for the blow-up coming at this time, is his strong supporter, Vladimir Bedijer--Central Committee member and Tito's official biographer.
 - A. The original "Djilas Affair" had its origins in series articles by Djilas, published from Oct '53 to early Jan '54. Djilas, who was then boss of party's propaganda activities, proposed greater "political democracy" for Yugoslavia.
 1. Proposal brought basic ideological dispute into open:
 - a.) On one hand, Tito and party leaders knew that following Soviet system in Yugo could only lead to rigid bureaucracy. Hence must develop some "democracy," starting in economic sector.

DOCUMENT NO. 1
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.
DECLASSIFIED
DATE 11/11/01 BY 702
27 Dec 79

Realistically realized, however, that political control must remain with party, since Yugos, if given chance, would reject socialism. Held that "political democracy" could come only after economic system was fully socialist.
 - b.) Djilas on the other hand, held that no "democracy"

could develop while party kept political control. Believing Yugos already had accepted socialism, he proposed establishment of competing political groups. Resulting free political discussion, in Djilas' view, would be only way to find proper economic forms.

2. Party leaders originally swallowed Djilas' articles which, in double talk, seemed same as own line plugging greater economic "democracy."

a.) Woke up only when Djilas started attack on snobbery of Party wives and sybaritic lives of bureaucratic party leaders.

b.) Held Central Committee discussion, condemned Djilas' views, relieved him of all party and government posts.

3. Only important party member who supported Djilas was Dedijer. Dedijer continued as Central Committee member, although dropped from foreign policy post in Parliament.

B. During intervening months, controversy lay dormant: Djilas turned in party card in April '54. As private citizen, lived on government pension, doing translation work. Dedijer taught at Belgrade University, claimed he was out of political work.

1. Although Tito said Djilas was politically dead, he obviously was not. His stand for more "political

democracy" was known in Yugoslavia and was propagated abroad through interviews with visiting foreign politicians, journalists.

2. Dedijs's continued support for Djilas' ideas also known. Rumors in Belgrade political circles said the two men were slowly making political comeback.

II. Affair was revived on 27 November, '54 when party Central Committee met just before Tito's departure for India.

- A. Some leaders apparently felt Djilas views still too prominent, decided Dedijs should be disciplined.

1. Latter was subject to party discipline, since still Central Committee member, whereas Djilas only a private citizen.
2. Tito expecting repercussions among younger party elements, may well have planned action for time when he away on trip, thus dissociating self from move, also reemphasizing its routine nature.

- B. Party Control Commission met (17 Dec '54) to see whether Dedijs still supported Djilas' views.

1. Dedijs challenged committee's competence to question him, walked out of meeting.
2. Then sought out Western correspondents in apparent attempt to gain support through foreign press.
3. Djilas also gave interview to Western correspondent, said government controlled by "undemocratic forces," time had come for formation of second socialist party.

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C. Vice-President Kardelj publicly blasted both men on 27 Dec '54, accusing them of blackmailing country, undermining Yugo foreign policy.

1. 28 Dec '54 proposal to strip Dedijer of party posts followed by removal of parliamentary immunity from prosecution.
2. Trial now being prepared for both men on charges of propagandizing against state.

III. Consequences of affair can be considered under following headings:

A. Foreign Policy--no change.

1. Can discount Dedijer's emotional claim that move against him is result of connivance between USSR and Yugo party for purge of those behind '48 break.
2. Djilas discounts any such Soviet influence, calls affair strictly an intra-party struggle.
3. Soviet reaction limited to reporting without comment.

B. Party and regime stability--no threat.

1. Top Yugo leaders, including army, remain loyal to regime.
2. Party members supporting Djilas' ideas do not occupy positions of power--are mainly junior party elements such as students, writers, intellectuals.
3. Actually, regime is less worried about any excess of liberal inclination among regional Communist Party leaders than it is by an opposite desire of those leaders to return to more rigid, authoritarian system of past.

C. Ideology--continued dilemma.

1. No matter how effectively men are silenced, ideological dispute will continue.
2. Djilas realizes party is wrong, for as long as it controls all power, no "democracy" can start.
3. Party realizes Djilas is wrong, for concession of political power now would mean end of Communist program in Yugoslavia.

D. The regime may react to this unforeseen public revival of the Djilas affair as follows:

1. Hush up the case, possibly even dropping all criminal charges against the two men. The criminal case was apparently cooked up without Tite's knowledge.
2. Slight retrenchment in civil liberties, reversing tendency of recent years. However, the regime will try to avoid more obnoxious police techniques.
3. Mild, fairly small purge of lower-level party members who have deviated too far toward Djilas' views.
4. General tightening of party discipline, particularly in press, universities, etc.

E. Tito regime will continue development its own brand of "Yugoslav socialism."

1. Kardelj's speech (27 Dec '54), which sharply condemned Djilas and Dedijer, nonetheless reaffirmed more 'liberal' recent government and party policies.

- a.) Party's role is to remain one of persuasion, not of forcible direction.**
- b.) Cooperation with other socialist parties is to continue.**
- c.) Peasant collectives are out--were wrong to begin with--cooperatives of Western type are eventual answer for socializing agriculture.**
- 2. Regime will probably continue such policies, in attempt to prove that "democracy" can first come in the economy, even though the party retains all political power.**